

coastal areas. Plant lists for some of these are given in appendices.

Finally, in Chapter 5, all of the components are brought together to describe the animal life with examples of mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles, amphibians, insects and spiders.

Now we have a reconstruction of the natural history of early Melbourne based on its abiotic and biotic ecological components and their myriad interactions. Part 2 uses this background to examine seven topics including the lifestyle of the aboriginal people, why the city is located where it is, modification of our rivers, and the way the shape of Melbourne has evolved.

So that is the thrust of the book. It is well produced with numerous relevant coloured plates of maps, scenes, vegetation and animals. It was

awarded the Community History Award for 2009, an accolade well deserved.

A couple of small criticisms: I would have found the large numbers easier to read if they had not lost their commas, and faint captions to pictures and quotations were almost illegible to my eyes. Typographical errors were present, but pleasingly few. I am a little suspicious of the record of Brush Turkey *Alectra lathamii* for the Merri Creek.

Buy or borrow a copy for its methodology and its conclusions; it is a valuable contribution to the sense of place for those living in Melbourne.

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Invisible connections: why migrating shorebirds need the Yellow Sea

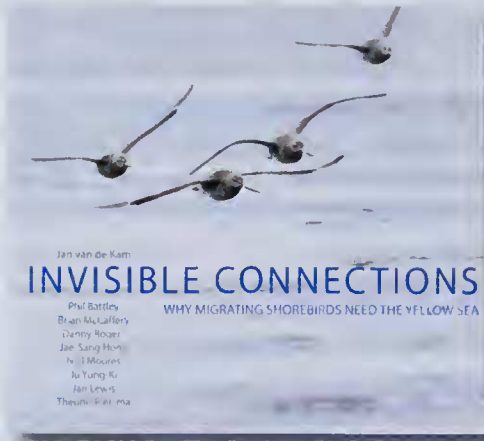
by J van de Kam (Photographs), P Battley, B McCaffery, D Rogers,
J-S Hong, N Moores, J Yung-Ki, J Lewis and T Piersma

*Publisher: CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, 2010. 160 pages, paperback;
colour photographs. ISBN 9780643096592. RRP \$49.95*

This book has been inspired by the awesome feat of shorebird migration, and by a deepening concern over the loss of key migratory stopover sites. It is the product of a passionate group of world renowned scientists and a world renowned photographer, who have dedicated large portions of their professional lives to documenting the wonder and demise of the Yellow Sea, perhaps the most important link in the migratory pathway used by shorebirds, known as the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. This book represents a major achievement in diplomacy and collaboration (forewords from Australia, China and South Korea), and seems clearly targeted at the general public, presumably to inspire, educate and empower. Key among the threats to shorebird sites in the Yellow Sea is reclamation, an ancient practice which has reached an incredible and worrying scale, and which threatens a number of species and populations of migratory shorebirds. The

authors warn us that time is running out to save migratory shorebirds using the Yellow Sea, and they describe the gradual raising of awareness among the peoples of the Flyway to the story of migration and the value of the 'invisible connections' they provide.

Eight chapters describe the life history of migratory shorebirds, the habitats they use, the need for conservation action and some of the initiatives that have been invoked to help save these birds. The content is as international as the birds it describes, ranging from the arid coasts of Australia to the arctic tundras. Books such as this, written by a group of concerned scientists and conservationists, could fall into the trap of zealous advocacy in which the truth is melded to serve the desired outcome; however, the authors have kept it on solid scientific ground. Cutting edge research is presented and contextualised in a reader-friendly manner that is highly accessible to the average reader. It is



simply a delight to read the work of this star-studded cast of international shorebird biologists and ecologists.

This book is a feast for the eyes, with 240 wonderful colour photographs from throughout the Flyway (they are to be found on every page). These images are as good as photographs get, and they are reproduced and laid-out superbly. Page numbers are frequently (and rightly) omitted to leave the images unspoilt, and many images cover the entire page. The reader is treated not only to the customary spectacular close ups of individual birds (e.g. the Bar-tailed Godwit

on page 13), but also to behavioural sequences (e.g. the fight of two Whimbrel on page 122), and landscapes (e.g. the Great Knot standing vigil over the tundra valley in eastern Siberia on page 70). This is the most impressive collection of published shorebird images of which I am aware.

A few minor criticisms are possible for any book, and here they barely warrant mention. I would have liked to see a clearer distinction, for the lay reader, between migrants and residents (the latter also depend heavily on sites used by migrants) and the caption on page 92 is not strictly accurate with respect to Point Cook. However, these issues are trivial.

I cannot overstate my enthusiasm for this book, and it is not just because I am a shore-birder! This book is about birds, but also about people and places, and the precious things we are set to lose if we don't become more sympathetic to the needs of the wildlife with which we share the planet. The contributors are to be congratulated, not only on the quality of their work, but also on taking the initiative to take their science to a broad audience. I highly recommend this wonderful book.

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Wildlife of Australia

by Louise Egerton and Jiri Lochman

Publisher: Jacana Books, 2009, 448 pages,
hardback, colour photographs.
ISBN 9781741149975. RRP \$59.99

What can I say about this book? *Wildlife of Australia* contains a wealth of information on Australian biodiversity, with separate sections devoted to mammals, birds, freshwater fishes, reptiles, frogs and invertebrate species. Selected species appear in family groupings and the habits, habitat, breeding and feeding of each are discussed.

